

“When I had no place to go at night, I would go home with someone,” Jaime N. said of his choosing prostitution over sleeping in a park or building doorway.

Understanding the Association Between Foster Care and Human Sex Trafficking

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Workshop Objectives

- To increase awareness around issues facing older youth in the foster care system and in the early years post discharge out of the system.
- To influence a paradigm shift in case management with older youth and young adults in the foster care system.

What is the **BIG** Deal?

Is there a link between early sexual victimization and later adolescent prostitution?

Is there an association between foster care and human sex trafficking?

What We Know For Sure...

- Human trafficking is a relatively new issue and emerging area of knowledge for most social service, legal, and law enforcement professionals. It was only in 2000 that the first federal anti-trafficking statute, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), was enacted.
- Children and youth who are U.S. citizens are often misidentified as juvenile prostitutes or criminals and placed in the juvenile justice system.
- As many as 300,000-400,000 children are commercially exploited in the United States each year.
- Nationally, as many as 2.4 million children run away from home each year, with 1 out of every 3 homeless teens being lured toward prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home. Statistically, this means at least 800,000 runaway children will be lured into commercial sexual exploitation each year.
- Venues where children are trafficked for sex include truck stops, motels, casinos, the internet, group homes, homes, apartment buildings, and condos.

What We Know For Sure...

- Approximately 20,000 youth “age out” or emancipate from foster care each year.
- Up to 50% of former foster youth become homeless within the first 18 months of emancipation.
- Approximately 27% of the homeless population spent time in foster care.
- Nearly 60% of youth shelter recipients spent some time in foster care.
- Former foster youth are likely to experience unemployment and imprisonment.

Are We **SHOCKED?**

According to Research...

- Most prostituted youth have been sexually and otherwise abused in their homes or foster care settings, and many have run away or have been thrown out of their homes.
- Many of these youth don't have stable, loving families or basic necessities, and they often suffer from low self-esteem and have limited access to educational and occupational opportunities.
- For some, emancipation and exiting foster care mean a direct route to the street. The pressure of not having a place to live can push youth into choosing prostitution or abusive relationships in order to get off the street

According to Research...

- The overwhelming majority of sexually exploited youth are runaways or castaways from dysfunctional homes where they have suffered physical, psychological and sexual abuse.
- Sexual abuse in particular is cited as a leading cause for entry into the sex.
- According to a report by the National Institute of Justice, persons who were sexually abused as children are twenty-eight times more likely than their non-abused peers to be arrested for prostitution.
- Many of the children in the foster care system have been sexually abused.
- Gay and transgendered prostituted youth are often rejected by their families for their sexual orientation.

According to Chicago Tribune (2008)...

article "Foster runaways risk prostitution"

Because many girls in foster care can feel starved for a sense of family, experts say it is not uncommon for pimps to target group homes and groom girls for prostitution by giving them attention and gifts. They often even let the girls think they are dating, and use one foster child to recruit others.

Group homes are magnets for pimps.

A study by the DePaul University College of Law interviewed 100 prostitutes younger than 25 and found more than half had started before age 16.

Consider Foster Youth In Maryland...

According to the research on human sex trafficking, this group is at-risk of being lured:

Ages 11-21

Total is 5481

(in out of home care)

December 2009/DHR Report

Do You Agree with the Research?

So, what **IS** the association between foster care and human sex trafficking?

Risk Factors for HST

(and the face of many youth in foster care)

- Involved in the foster care system

(and/or other systems)

- Vulnerable

(low-income, runaway/AWOL, homeless, disconnected from school or work)

- Unstable home environment
- Parental/family history of human sex trafficking
 - History of child sexual abuse
- Lack of connection & positive intimate relationship with significant adult
 - Older boyfriend or partner

Protective Factors for HST

- Intelligence

(ability to learn, understand or to deal with new or trying situations)

- Temperament

(behavioral style; temperament vs expectations)

- Cognitive Appraisal

(perception of situation)

- Relationship with a significant person

- Stable and functional home

The Paradigm Shift

(with focus on Protective Factors of HST)

Assessment /Case Management/Supervision

(probe history of human sex trafficking, intelligence, perception of situation, relationships)

Child Placement

(considering history of human sex trafficking, venues for human sex trafficking and problems at placement)

Teaming

(work closely with partners involved daily with human sex trafficking cases)

Training

(mandate training specific to human sex trafficking; protective factors for HST)

Outreach

(Outreach programs to assist young women/men in leaving prostitution)

Questions?

Credits

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Thank You!